

Our Places

Eastern Bay Spatial Plan



Wāhanga 1: Whakatakinga

Part 1: Introduction

June 2025



BAY OF PLENTY
REGIONAL COUNCIL
TOI MOANA



WHAKATĀNE
District Council
Kia Whakatāne au i ahau



KAWERAU
DISTRICT COUNCIL
Te Kaunihera ā rohe o Kawerau



Ōpōtiki District Council
STRONG COMMUNITY STRONG FUTURE





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Wāhanga 2: Whakatakinga

Part 1: Introduction

We have created a plan that helps us set a vision for the future growth of the Whakatāne, Kawerau and Ōpōtiki Districts, within the rohe of the iwi and hapū of Eastern Bay of Plenty in the wider Bay of Plenty Region. Our Places – Eastern Bay Spatial Plan (Our Places) sets out where the Eastern Bay of Plenty wants to head and provides a roadmap for how to get there.

The Eastern Bay is renowned for its outstanding natural and cultural taonga, attracting people to our region over the centuries. We are all part of a continuum – there were those before us and there will be those after us. We have a responsibility to care for the taonga we have inherited while meeting the needs of current and future generations. Those needs include ensuring that our people can continue to live, work, visit and play in the Eastern Bay, now and in the future. It's about providing safe places for people to live, supporting the local economy, adapting to a changing climate and protecting our environment – ultimately, ensuring people and places can thrive.

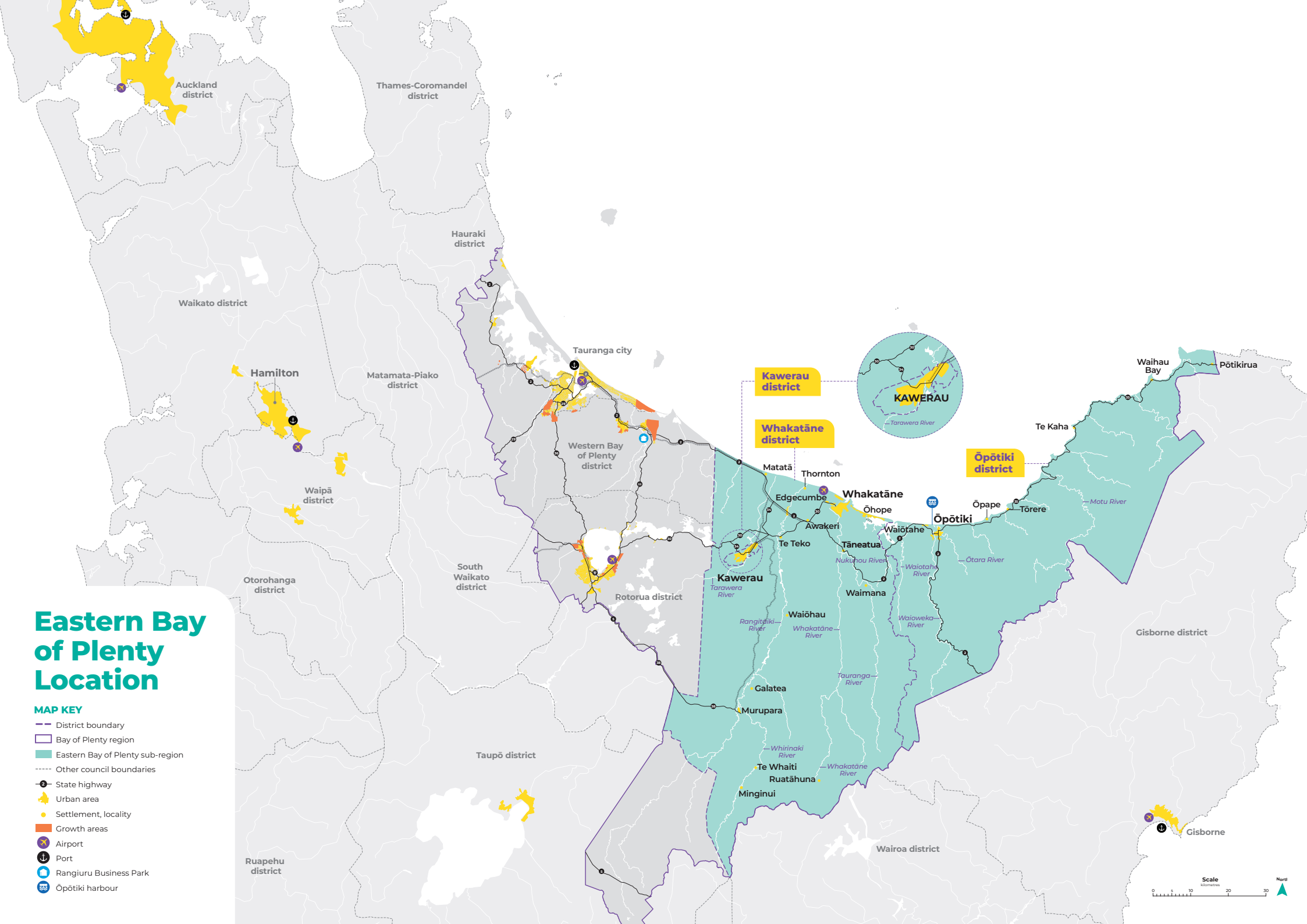
Our Places is a collaboration between Whakatāne, Kawerau, and Ōpōtiki District Councils and Toi Moana Bay of Plenty Regional Council, working in partnership with iwi and government agencies. Together, we are responding to the challenges and opportunities facing the sub-region.

Our Places provides a framework to help our communities grow sustainably. It focuses on improving our amenities, protecting our environment, offering better transport options, and providing housing that meets the needs of our diverse and growing population. The plan also emphasises the importance of safeguarding our natural, cultural, and historic resources, building resilient communities, managing risk in a changing climate, and strengthening strong partnerships with iwi and hapū.

By encouraging investment and economic development, Our Places aims to support a strong and resilient local economy. The plan promotes community involvement, giving residents a chance to have their say in planning for the future. Overall, the spatial plan offers a long-term vision for coordinated planning, resource allocation, and decision-making across the Eastern Bay.

Eastern Bay of Plenty Location

- MAP KEY**
- District boundary
 - Bay of Plenty region
 - Eastern Bay of Plenty sub-region
 - Other council boundaries
 - State highway
 - Urban area
 - Settlement, locality
 - Growth areas
 - Airport
 - Port
 - Rangioru Business Park
 - Ōpōtiki harbour





Mō tēnei mahere

About this plan

Who are we planning for?

Our Places has been developed for the people of the Eastern Bay, now and for future generations.

The Eastern Bay has about 57,000 residents, and we need to plan for many more. Of the total number of residents, 33,500 (59%) live in Kawerau, Ōpōtiki, and Whakatāne; 11,650 (20%) in Awakeri, Matatā, Murupara, Tāneatua, Te Teko, and Edgecumbe; and 11,850 (21%) in rural areas.

By 2055, the Eastern Bay's population is projected to increase to 68,000 (although it could be more or less). This growth means we will need more housing, land for businesses, and supporting infrastructure.

Our population is ageing, alongside a youthful and growing Māori population. By 2055, people aged over 65 could make up almost one third of the population, up from 17% in 2018. Māori have a younger age profile compared to the general population, with a median age around ten years younger. This demographic trend means that future housing in the Eastern Bay will need to support both a growing and ageing population, with particular attention to the needs of our young and vibrant Māori community.

Our region is unique for its strong Māori identity, with one of the highest Māori populations in the country. Māori make up over half of the Eastern Bay's population, including around two-thirds of the population in both Kawerau and Ōpōtiki Districts and nearly half in the Whakatāne District.

What the spatial plan is used for?

The Our Places – Eastern Bay Spatial Plan captures our collective aspirations and goals for the sub-region, outlining how we can tackle challenges and seize opportunities together. Here’s how it will help:

Guiding growth and development: The plan outlines where we expect urban growth and development across the Eastern Bay while ensuring communities are safe and resilient. It aligns strategies across local councils, central government agencies, and iwi and hapū partners to create a coordinated, long-term approach to growth.

Informing priorities and decision making: The plan guides councils and government agencies on where to invest in infrastructure and services to help our communities grow.

Building partnerships: The plan focuses on collaboration with different groups to address community needs through collective actions, joined-up infrastructure delivery and advocacy.

Effective regulation: While this plan does not replace District Plans or change zoning, it plays a key role in guiding detailed growth planning. It will inform District Plans and Long-Term Plans, helping to align decision-making across agencies by providing a shared, long-term view of growth. Our Places also places the Eastern Bay in a strong position to respond to the upcoming reforms of the Resource

Management Act (RMA), which are expected to require a regional spatial plan.

Integrating other plans: The plan considers other policies and programmes that influence places. For areas facing changes, it shows

how councils can work collectively with each other and for communities and landowners to understand impacts and plan together. Our Places will align with the Sub-Regional Economic Development Strategy to support growth.



Figure 2: How the plan is implemented

Who has been involved in making the plan?

Our Places has been developed in partnership with local, regional and central government along with iwi partners from across the sub-region.

The wellbeing of Eastern Bay communities is closely connected, and partners recognised the need to plan and deliver outcomes together as a sub-region, rather than as separate authorities, iwi, and districts.

This led to the formation of a partnership in 2022, when leaders from across the Eastern Bay recognised the need to work together to positively shape the future of the sub-region. The partnership includes people and organisations with a significant role in managing growth across the Eastern Bay. It is underpinned by the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi), including partnership, informed decision-making, and active participation. Our Places has been developed in collaboration with tangata whenua and iwi representatives through the Project Governance Group.

Iwi*

Ngāi Tai Iwi Authority
Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Awa
Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Manawa
Te Mana o Ngāti Rangitahi
Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whare Iwi Trust
Te Rūnanga o Te Whānau a Apanui
Te Tāwharau o Te Whakatōhea
Tūwharetoa ki Kawerau

Public stakeholders

Friends of Our Places
People living in the Eastern Bay

Councils

Whakatāne District Council
Kawerau District Council
Ōpōtiki District Council
Toi Moana Bay of Plenty Regional Council

Central Government Agencies

NZ Transport Agency - Waka Kotahi
Kāinga Ora
Ministry of Housing and Urban Development
Ministry of Education
Health New Zealand - Te Whatu Ora

** Iwi authorities involved in the project at the time of this report; not all have chosen to actively participate in the project, but are being kept informed*

Figure 3: Groups involved in making the plan

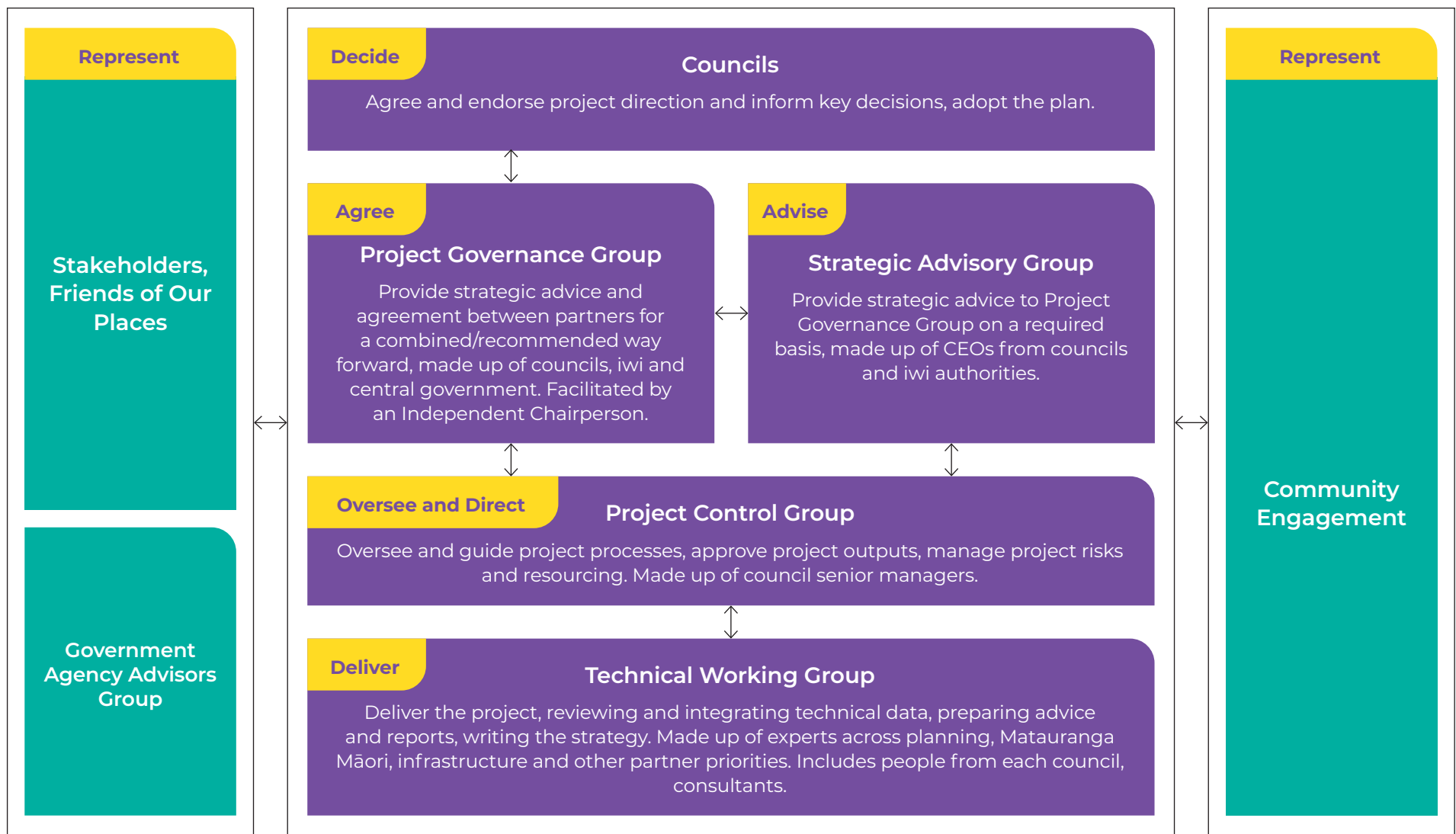


Figure 4: Project team structure

How does it align with the policy, planning, funding, and project delivery framework?

One of the primary objectives of Our Places is to integrate various policy directions and planning processes into a unified set of priorities.

This shared vision can serve as the foundation for a broader framework of directives, strategies, policies, and plans. It also informs programmes at national, regional, and local levels that influence growth and development across the Eastern Bay.

Our Places supports the purpose of the Local Government Act 2002 by enabling local decision-making and promoting the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of the communities in the Eastern Bay. It also reflects the requirements of the Land Transport Management Act 2003, which calls for the integration of land use and transport planning. The plan draws on the 2024 Government Policy Statement (GPS) on Land Transport, which outlines the strategic priorities for transport investment. The spatial plan has also been informed by the RMA and the suite of National Policy Statements (NPS), which provide direction on matters of national significance.

National direction for resource management and planning is in a period of significant transition. The plan enables the Eastern Bay to proactively speak on its priorities in these processes, informing the development of pending regional spatial plans announced in the RMA reform.



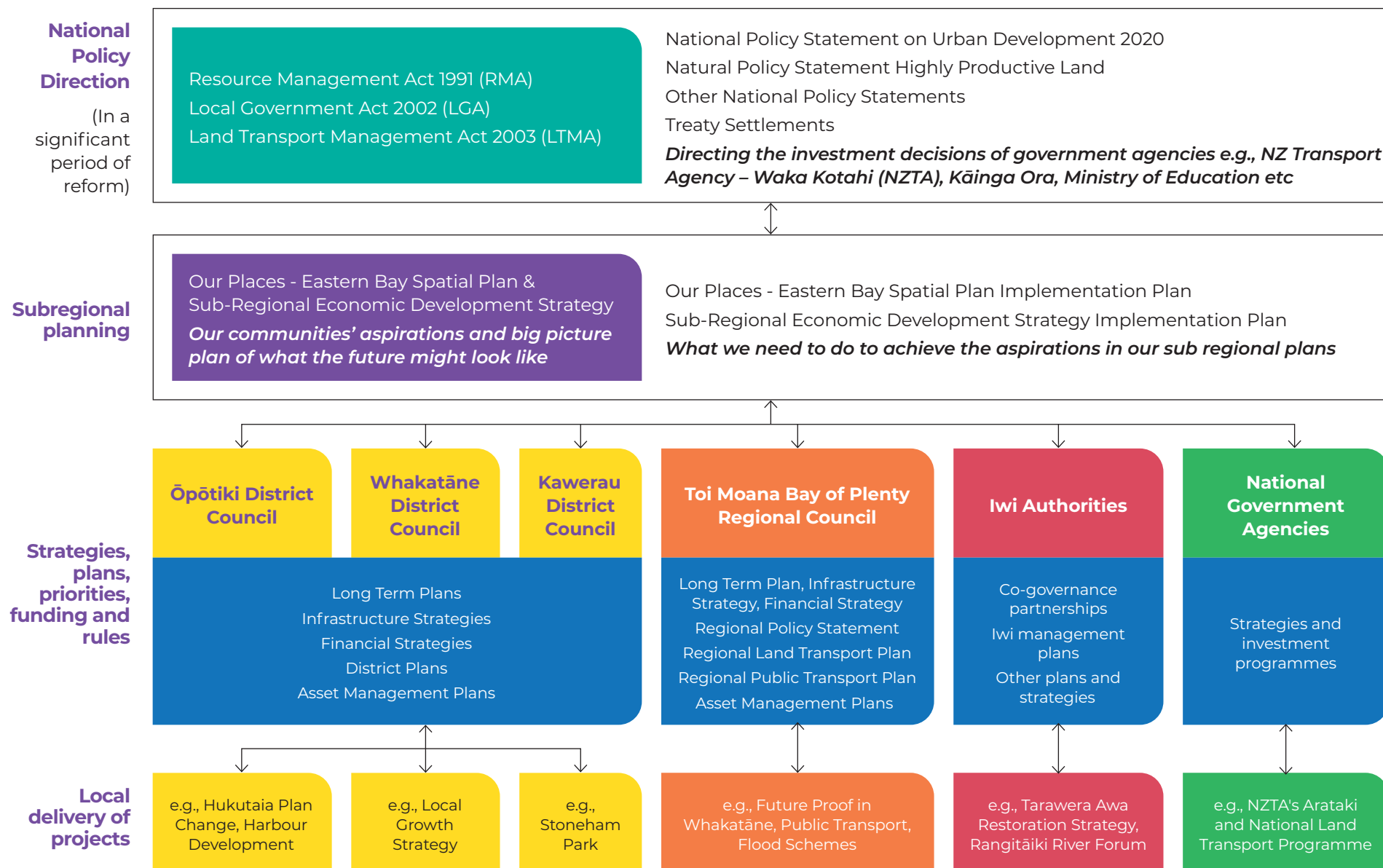


Figure 5: Planning and policy direction

What process was undertaken to prepare the plan?

Partners took a collaborative approach to prepare Our Places, including engagement with communities and stakeholders. This allowed the people of the Eastern Bay to have their say on what matters most, particularly in relation to the places we live, work, play, and invest. It also provides relevant agencies with a clear understanding of future priorities, resourcing, and funding needs



Figure 6: Process to prepare the plan



Te whakatinana i ngā moemoeā o ngā iwi

Enabling iwi visions for the future

Iwi are key partners in the Eastern Bay, with customary rights and responsibilities to use, protect, and develop their ancestral taonga, including land and water. These responsibilities include supporting the wellbeing of their people through initiatives such as healthy housing and sustainable employment.

Iwi are emerging as major investment partners across aquaculture, horticulture, agriculture, tourism, forestry, and water resources.

The strong connection iwi and hapū have to whenua and place continue to inform and drive aspirations for social, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing.

Iwi in the Eastern Bay

Iwi of the Eastern Bay are grounded in whakapapa, whenua, and generations of connection to place. Iwi have an enduring relationship with the rohe, upholding the values, tikanga, and identity of their people through generations of change. Their presence is not only historical, but living, enduring and resilient.

Iwi continue to lead with purpose, restoring mana motuhake and revitalising te reo Māori, tikanga, and environmental stewardship. Their role in the region is central, not only as tangata whenua but as contributors to community wellbeing, education, and whānau resilience.

Economically, iwi are investors, employers, and innovators. Iwi governance entities drive sustainable development, partner with local and regional government, and support projects that reflect their aspirations. The iwi of the Eastern Bay are essential to the social, cultural, and economic fabric of the region, and are key to helping shape a future that honours the past and uplifts generations to come.

Hapū, whānau, and Māori Land Trusts play a vital role in sustaining the fabric of iwi life in the Eastern Bay. As the foundation of iwi identity and governance, hapū and whānau carry the responsibilities of ahi kā, ensuring the

ongoing presence, and providing protection and guidance on the use of whenua, awa, and maunga. Māori Land Trusts and incorporations, often established to manage whenua Māori under collective ownership, are key vehicles for advancing local development, supporting marae, and providing opportunities for future generations. Together, these entities enable grounded decision-making, uphold intergenerational responsibilities, and ensure that the aspirations of whānau and hapū are reflected in the management and use of whenua and resources.

In the Eastern Bay, there are 11 iwi, 99 hapū and 92 marae. These iwi include:

- Te Whānau a Apanui
- Ngāti Porou
- Ngāi Tai
- Te Whakatōhea
- Ngāti Awa
- Ngāti Mākinō
- Ngāi Tūhoe
- Ngāti Rangitihī
- Tūwharetoa ki Kawerau
- Ngāti Manawa
- Ngāti Whare

Twenty two percent (22%) of land in the Eastern Bay is Māori Freehold Land (168,987 ha), making iwi and Māori Land Trusts key parties in the development of the Eastern Bay. Māori-led housing and economic activities are inseparable from the Eastern Bay. Spatial planning must acknowledge the historical whakapapa each iwi and hapū hold to their whenua and that this is meaningfully reflected in decision-making.



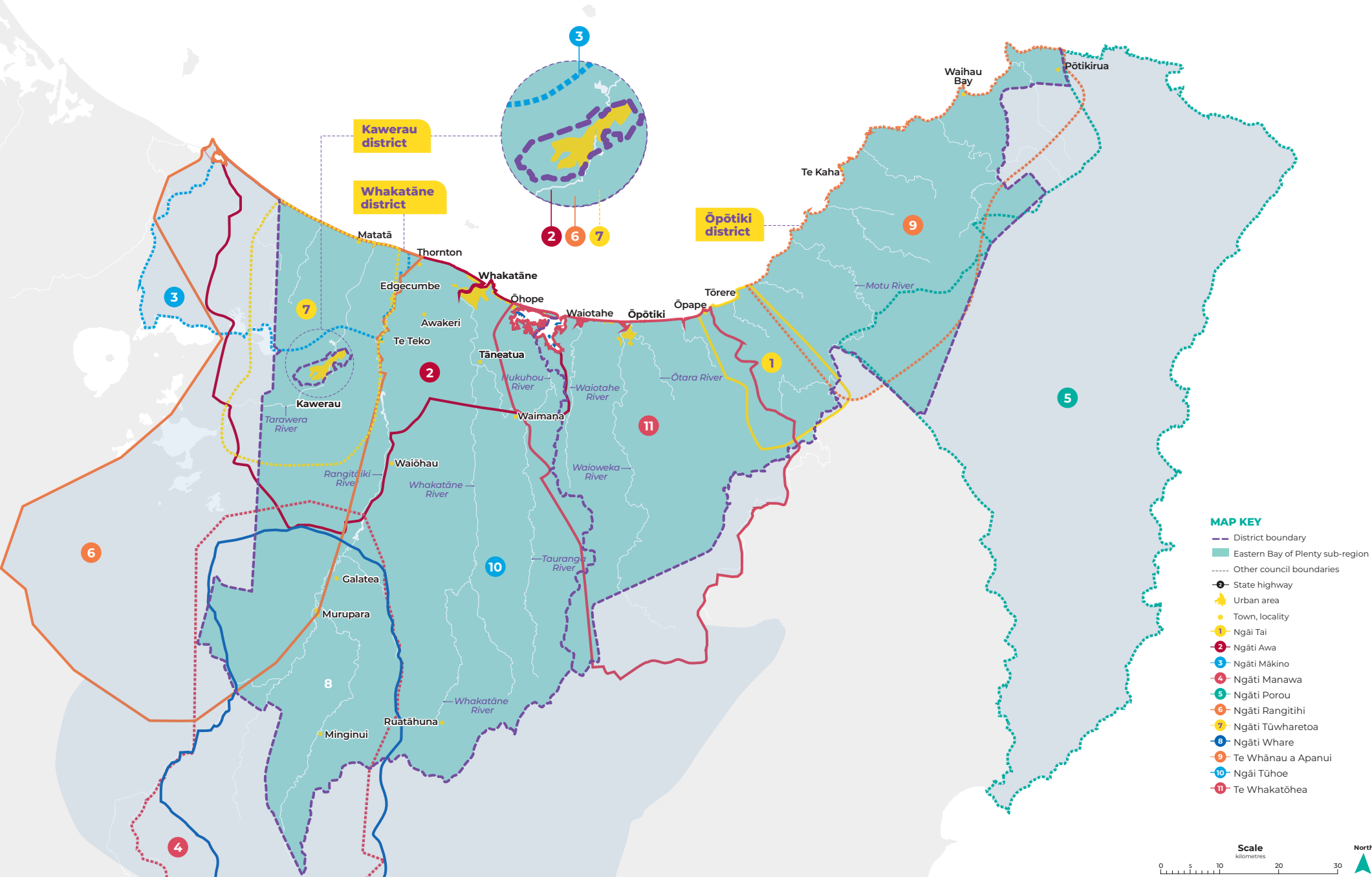
Treaty Settlements

Treaty Settlements are formal agreements between the Crown and iwi that aim to address historical breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. In the Eastern Bay of Plenty, iwi such as Ngāti Awa, Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Manawa, Ngāti Whare, Te Whakatōhea, Ngāti Rangitihī, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Mākinō, Tūwharetoa ki Kawerau (as part of the Ngāti Tūwharetoa settlement) have settled with the Crown through these processes. Ngāi Tai and Te Whānau a Apanui are still in negotiations. Treaty Settlements typically include financial and cultural redress, the return of specific lands or sites of significance, and formal apologies.

The settlements enable iwi to reassert rangatiratanga and require the establishment of Post-Settlement Governance Entities (PSGEs). They also support iwi participation in co-governance arrangements, environmental management, regional planning and strengthening iwi presence across social, cultural, economic, and political spheres.

Iwi rohe in the Eastern Bay

*areas are indicative and are shown as per Te Puni Kōkiri iwi maps.



Visions for the future

Aspirations and priorities have been documented from engagement on the spatial plan and from materials provided in prior consultation processes.

These matters came to the top as consistently important for iwi and hapū and have guided the content of Our Places – Eastern Bay Spatial Plan.

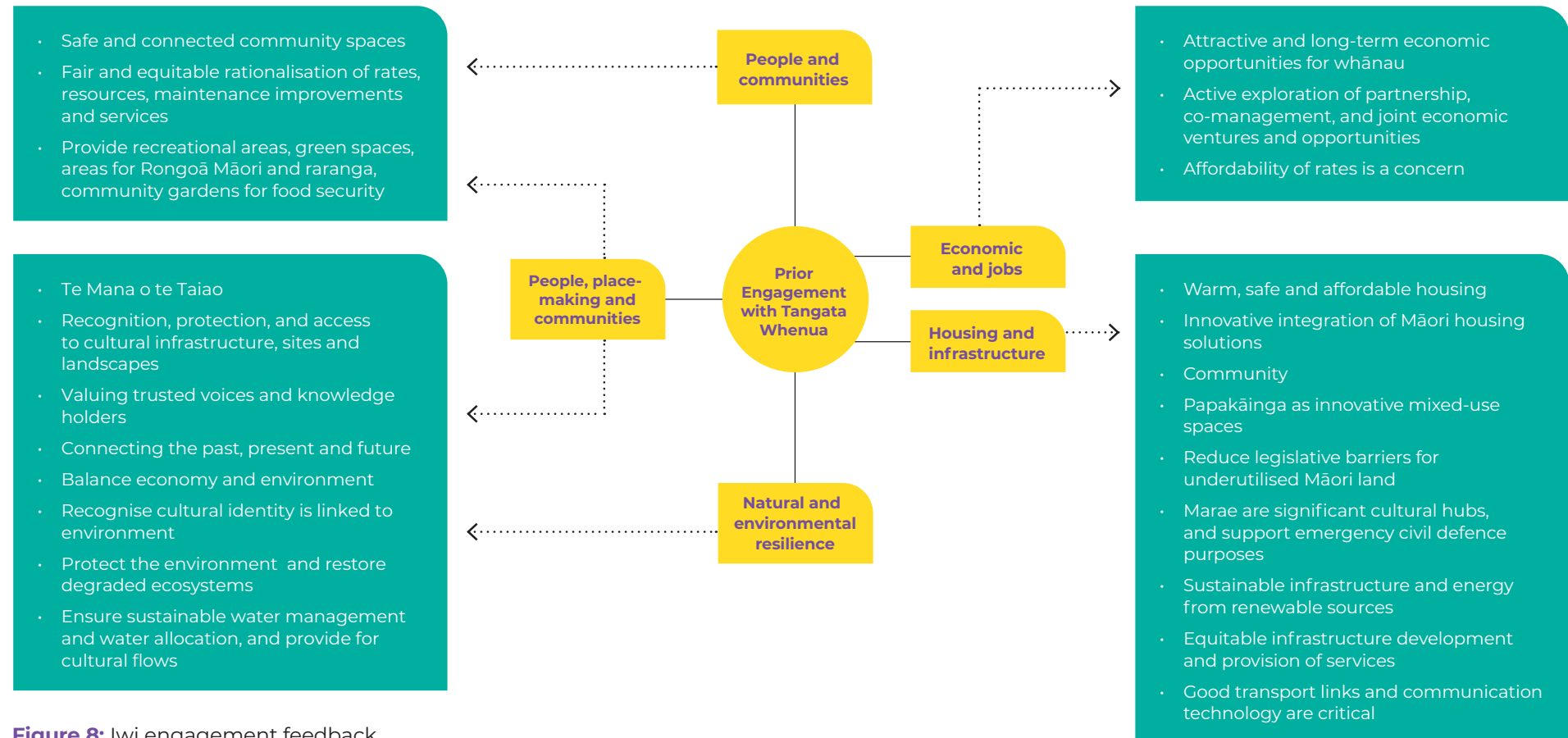


Figure 8: Iwi engagement feedback

Ngā uara me ngā wawata o te hapori

The community's values and aspirations

The implementation priorities of the spatial plan respond to the interests and ambitions outlined by the community through engagement, with a focus on quality of life and the environment.



Figure 9: Themes of engagement feedback

Ngā whāinga hei whakatutuki

What we want to achieve

The Project Governance Group developed goals to provide direction for the spatial plan in achieving long-term wellbeing outcomes. These were developed to be aligned with the Long-Term Plan visions and community outcomes across the sub-region. They also reflect on prior engagements and consultations, taking into account iwi values and aspirations.

Goals

Whai hauora me te whakarauora
Healthy and healing

Ngā ohaoha toitū, kanorau hoki, e tuku
ana i ngā mahi me ngā kaupapa mō te
iwi whānui

Sustainable, diversified economy
providing jobs and purpose for our
people

Ngā tāngata, ngā hapori me ngā
tauwāhi e hono ana, e tōnui ana, e
manawaroa ana hei whakaata i te hītori
me ngā tūmanako o tātou katoa

Connected, thriving, resilient people,
communities & places that reflect our
history and aspirations

Figure 10: Goals

Our Places

Eastern Bay Spatial Plan

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